

Science & Technology

NEWS

November 14, 2002

House Science Committee, Democratic Membership

Mail address:

2320 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515
202/225-6375

Office Location:

394 Ford House Office Building
fax: 202/225-3895

staff contact: Mark Harkins 202/226-8324

http://www.house.gov/science_democrats/welcome.htm

SCIENCE DEMOCRATS CONTRIBUTE KEY PROVISIONS TO HOMELAND SECURITY LEGISLATION

House Science Committee Democrats played a major role in shaping the Homeland Security bill (H.R. 5710) that passed the House yesterday. Passage in the Senate is expected soon. Science Democrats drafted provisions in the legislation establishing a Homeland Security Institute, a technology clearinghouse, and a Science and Technology Advisory Committee, and led the effort to block transfer of the Computer Security Division of the National Institutes of Standards and Technology (NIST).

Homeland Security Institute – Rep. Lynn Woolsey (CA) and Rep. Michael M. Honda (CA) authored the provision establishing a Homeland Security Institute (HSI), the key recommendation of the recent National Research Council study on homeland security research priorities (*Making the Nation Safer: The Role of Science and Technology in Countering Terrorism*). The HSI think tank would house scientific and technical expertise to work on key research issues at the direction of the Department. The Institute's charter includes Mr. Honda's emphasis on technology roadmaps.

Ms. Woolsey said, "I am proud that my amendment, originally offered in the Science Committee, to create the HSI is included in the final version of the Homeland Security Act. Experts point out that an appropriate role for the Institute would be to work with federal, state, and local agencies to address R&D needs in responding to terrorist attack. Only by identifying and developing the technology needed by first responders and emergency personnel can we protect our communities from acts of terrorism."

Technology Clearinghouse – The bill establishes a single point of entry for those seeking guidance on how to develop products that would contribute to homeland security. During the Science Committee's markup, Reps. Honda, Lynn Rivers (MI) and David Wu (OR) authored this provision, which would eliminate many procedural bottlenecks that discourage American inventiveness. It directs the Department, in conjunction with the inter-agency group known as the Technical Support Working Group (TSWG), to provide full service to those Americans with promising unsolicited ideas.

Mr. Honda said, "It is important that the Department of Homeland Security assess best-of-breed technologies in our fight against terror. I also applaud the creation of a 'Technology Clearinghouse'. This portal will expedite the process for entrepreneurs and investors to contribute technology for the cause of homeland security, and could be beneficial to Silicon Valley industry."

Science and Technology Advisory Committee – Reps. Eddie Bernice Johnson (TX) and Steve Israel (NY) authored a provision creating an advisory committee to review and make recommendations on the activities of the Under Secretary for Science and Technology (S&T). The Committee will consist of experts in science and engineering, including representatives of the users of the Department's research activities - emergency responders - and of citizen groups, including groups from economically disadvantaged communities. The advisory committee will provide an independent review by which the Department and Congress can assess the utility of the Department's S&T activities. Inclusion of the emergency response and citizen groups communities will help ensure that research agencies are firmly tied to the actual needs of those who will be on the front lines of terrorist attacks.

Transfer of NIST's Computer Security Division – Rep. Zoe Lofgren (CA) led the Committee's efforts to maintain the NIST's Computer Security Division within NIST. The Senate bill endorsed

"By preventing this transfer, I believe we have not only worked to make our country more secure in the face of terrorist attacks, but we have preserved the credibility and success of NIST's Computer Security Division", said Representative Lofgren.

The Ranking Democratic Member, Ralph Hall (TX), said, "Our Members worked as a team to bring these provisions to the Committee and to convince our colleagues of the merits of these ideas. As a result of these provisions and the establishment of an Under Secretary for S&T, the new Department will be in a better position to acquire and effectively use the latest technologies. The Under Secretary's highest priority will be to see that the Department is aware of the latest technologies that can help combat the terrorist threat."

Rep. Sheila Jackson Lee (TX) said, "Creating a comprehensive strategy for increasing national security demands a high degree of cooperation, collaboration, and creativity throughout our Federal Government. I am pleased that this bill reflects the great vision of the Democrats who first proposed a Department of Homeland Security, and many of the ideas we developed in the Science Committee. I wish we had better incorporated elements proven effective in other agencies, such as better worker protections to ensure that the members of this critical department remain enthusiastic and applying cyber- and satellite-security technologies developed at NASA. However, establishing the DHS is a bold move forward that I am confident will make America safer."

"In Committee," said Representative Johnson, Ranking Democratic Member of the Subcommittee on Research, "I proposed an amendment that would have applied the classification procedures used by the Departments of Defense and Energy to the new Department. I am disappointed that H.R. 5710 does not include my amendment, which passed the Science Committee on a bipartisan basis. I hope to work with my colleagues in the 108th Congress to ensure that the new Department's classification guidelines do not impair the Department's science and technology operations."